

WAP0 CLEANS UP A FALSE MICHAEL MCF Faul ALLEGATION ABOUT RT

As I noted in my last post, I'm going to do some posts on the whackjob article WaPo published over the weekend, magnifying the assertions of some researchers (one group of which remain anonymous) alleging that outlets like Naked Capitalism are really Russian propaganda outlets.

In this post, I want to look at a correction the WaPo made after it was posted for a day. The original story featured this claim from former US Ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul.

A former U.S. ambassador to Russia, Michael A. McFaul, said he was struck by the overt support that RT and Sputnik expressed for Trump during the campaign, even using the #CrookedHillary hashtag pushed by the candidate.

In the interim, RT appears to have contacted WaPo, refuting the claims in the article (many of the other outlets claimed to be Russian propaganda outlets have yet to be contacted by the WaPo). A paragraph has been added, incorporating a statement from RT's head of communications.

Now the McFaul claim looks like this:

A former U.S. ambassador to Russia, Michael A. McFaul, said he was struck by the overt support that Sputnik expressed for Trump during the campaign, even using the #CrookedHillary hashtag pushed by the candidate.

And the article includes this correction:

Correction: A previously published version of this story incorrectly stated

that Russian information service RT had used the “#CrookedHillary” hashtag [sic] pushed by then-Republican candidate Donald Trump. In fact, while another Russian information service Sputnik did use this hashtag, RT did not.

The article itself didn't state that. McFaul did. The article simply paraphrased his claim.

Note, it appears people responding to RT have used the hashtag, which might be easy to confuse if you didn't look too closely. But then, so do people responding to WaPo tweets.

A proper correction would instead say something like this:

A leading expert on Russia, former Ambassador to Russia and current Stanford University Political Science professor Michael McFaul, claimed that both RT and Sputnik have used the #CrookedHillary hashtag. When we fact checked his claim after publication and after RT refuted the claim, we found the claim to be false, with respect to RT and have altered his reported claim accordingly.

Of course, that would entail admitting that some of the most celebrated experts on Russia – to say nothing of the ones at PropOrNot hiding behind anonymity – get sloppy with their accusations. WaPo chose not to do that though, instead suggesting they, not their chosen expert, had made the error.